

A

CAUTION

AGAINST

Tumultuous Petitions:

From a

Gentleman in the Countrey,

To his

Friend in LONDON,

Decemb. 30. 1679.

SIR,

THat little discourse we had last, wherein my opinion and suffrage was desired, concerning the reasonableness of General Addresses of all the Members to the Head, in an universal distemper of the Body; though in the humble dress of a Petition, hath yet so mutinous an Aspect, as carries a prodigious horror with it, and gives us the prospect of that calamity, disorder, and confusion, wherein such preposterous motions and commotions do usually determine by your self procured, but just judgment of an offended Deity to an insatuated People, that whilst the wounds of a detestable Rebellion and Civil War are yet bleeding, are fiercely prosecuting its sad revival. *And the rest of the men that were not killed by those plagues (mentioned in Rev. 9. 20, 21.) yet repented not of the works of their hands.* The redeemed Loyal Royallists repent not of their intemperancies, or at least reform it not; neither the Papists of their Idolatries and Conspiracies; the Presbyterians and Parliamenteers of their Murthers, Sorceries, Fornications, and Thefts; those Witchcrafts of Rebellion, wherewith they delude themselves and their Proselytes, and are made meer Properties to carry on their malicious and ambitious designs of the active hands of subtil Projectors of all Factions. And too late I fear we shall find the Jesuits, though undiscern'd, to be the grand Promoters of these Petitions, and what they could not effect as Papists, they endeavour doubtless as heretofore to accomplish by Protestant Presbyterians, sowing the seeds of Sedition and Dissention; and what these Petitioners would be at, is evident by the late Insurrection and Declaration of the Scotch Rebels, timely suppress'd by Divine Providence. *So let all thine Enemies perish, O Lord: But let those that love thee be as the Sun when he goeth forth in his might, that the Land may have rest many years.*

Now, Sir, it was, and is yet my wonder, that a person of your ingenuity and parts

parts should fall into this snare, and be caught with specious pretences, which are indispensably necessary to carry on a mischievous Design to subvert the Government, which they seem to endeavour to rectify and support, and with this Bait to catch well-meaning men, first to subscribe, and then to pursue that Engagement, and what ere conduces to advancement, or shall be imposed upon them.

Thus the Protestation, the fore-runner of the late War, had nothing in it, but what the best Protestant Christian in the World might with a good Conscience have subscribed, and yet upon that foundation there followed dreadful Superstructures. Perhaps you will say, the Petition is recommended from Persons eminent in the Nation, Patriots, and assertors of the Peoples interests and welfare: These indeed are Persons priviledged within doors, but they have no lawful Authority when out of the House, to promote any publick Petitions; neither are a multitude to be followed to do evil.

There were no less than 250 such *Princes of the Assembly famous in the Congregation, men of Renown*, (says the Text, Numb. 16. 2.) *And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron*, disputing their Prerogatives, and said unto them, *Ye take too much upon you, &c.* Neither did they leave out so necessary an ingredient to their purpose, as a complacent Complement to the People, by styling them the holy Congregation of the Lord, *every one of them*. The dreadful consequences of this follows in the Story: The Earth's Division devours them quick, to punish them for their Division, and Fire from Heaven consumes them, and the infecting minds of fourteen thousand seven hundred Rebels and Murmurers met the Plague, and became mortally infectious to one another. And are thus far parallel'd in our Times, that though the Earth did not swallow these Rebels up quick, yet the Lord did a new thing, and the Earth did in a manner vomit up three of the grand Rebels out of their graves, and since the Nation hath felt a War, and the bloody City, whose scum is yet in her, I fear hath felt the Fire and the Plague; and though it be affirm'd the Fire was by Plot, yet I think few will venture to say the Pestilence was a Plot. But these three prodigious Judgments had their Meteors to declare whence they came: *Lord, when thy hand is lifted up they will not see, but they shall see, and be ashamed for their envy towards thy loyal People, so that a man shall say, Doubtless there is a God that judgeth the Earth.*

How zealous God hath been for the supream Magistrate, and how severe to such as are over-busie to censure or pry into the Errors of Princes, there is a notable example in the punishment of *Miriam*, for lessening her reverence and duty to *Moses*, though a Brother, because he had taken a Gipsie, or *Ethiopian* Woman, or to speak in the language of our bad Times, a Mifs: And yet God said to an High-Priest and a Prophetess, *Wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses? and the anger of the Lord was kindled against them, and Miriam became leprous, white as snow.* Far be it from me to plead for Incontinency, or any thing scandalous to Christianity, for I know it gives too much occasion to the Enemies of God's Vice-gerent to blaspheme, and seems to be obnoxious to a punishment, like that of *David* in his Son *Absalom*. But I would not have any one think, that the Errors of Princes ought to lessen our Duties.

Let us therefore fear God and the King, and not meddle with those that are given to change, which I think is at this time a duty incumbent upon all that have the Cure of Souls, to press upon their Congregations.

Sir, Your putting the Question to me, must be my Apology for the declaration of my thoughts upon this Subject, which comes to you in a most unfeigned Integrity from,

Sir,

Your Affectionate Friend.